



Los Angeles County Regional Park And Open Space District

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October 21, 2014

The Honorable Board of Directors
County of Los Angeles
Regional Park and Open Space District
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Directors:

**ALLOCATE SPECIFIED EXCESS FUNDS AVAILABLE TO
THE FIRST SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT TO THE MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY AND AUTHORIZE AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION OF
A GRANT TO THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR
THE AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK GENERAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
(FIRST DISTRICT)
(3 VOTES)**

SUBJECT

Approval of the recommended actions will allocate an amount not to exceed \$250,000 in Specified Excess Funds, available to the First Supervisorial District, to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for a grant to the National Audubon Society for the proposed Audubon Center at Debs Park General Improvements Project.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

1. Find the proposed Audubon Center at Debs Park General Improvements Project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act for the reasons stated herein and the reasons reflected in the record of the project.
2. Allocate an amount not to exceed \$250,000 in Specified Excess Funds, available to the First Supervisorial District, to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for a grant to the National Audubon Society for the proposed Audubon Center at Debs Park General Improvements Project.
3. Authorize the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, in his capacity as the Director

of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, to award a grant to the National Audubon Society for the proposed Audubon Center at Debs Park General Improvements Project after the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority assigns its right to apply to the National Audubon Society and if applicable conditions have been met, and to administer the grant as of the date of this action and pursuant to procedures in the Procedural Guide for Specified, Per Parcel, and Excess Funds Projects; otherwise, funds shall remain in the Excess Funds account.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of the recommended actions will allocate an amount not to exceed \$250,000 in Specified Excess Funds, available to the First Supervisorial District pursuant to the Los Angeles County Safe Neighborhood Parks Proposition of 1996 (1996 Proposition), to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for a grant to the National Audubon Society (NAS) for the proposed Audubon Center at Debs Park General Improvements Project (Project).

NAS is non-profit environmental conservation organization whose mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. The Audubon Center at Debs Park (Center) is an environmental education and conservation center operated by Audubon California, and a state field program of NAS, is located in Ernest E. Debs Regional Park in the northeast Los Angeles community of Montecito Heights.

The proposed Project involves general improvements to the Center, including development of an entry sign, rehabilitation of the existing courtyard wall and stone pavers, purchase and installation of a replacement Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning system, rehabilitation of existing meeting spaces, and improvements to the existing children's natural play area. The overall Project cost is estimated at \$613,077. The recommended Specified Excess Funds will be supplemented with \$200,000 from Ahmanson Foundation, \$50,000 from Annenberg Foundation, and \$113,077 from private contributions.

MRCA, which is the designated recipient of Specified Excess Funds for projects along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries, will assign its right to apply for the \$250,000 to NAS.

It is also recommended that the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation (Director), in his capacity as Director of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, be authorized to award the grant after MRCA assigns the right to apply to NAS and only if applicable conditions have been met. Applicable conditions include grantee qualifications, consistency between the project and requirements of the 1996 Proposition, and grantee agreement with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for the project. It is further recommended that the Director be authorized to administer the grant pursuant to the Procedural Guide for Specified, Per Parcel, and Excess Funds Projects previously approved by the Board.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The recommended actions will further the Board-approved County Strategic Plan Goal of Operational Effectiveness/Fiscal Sustainability (Goal 1) by improving and enhancing recreational activities in the First Supervisorial District.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Sufficient appropriation for the Excess Funds grant, in the amount of \$250,000, is budgeted in the First Supervisorial District's portion of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District's (RPOSD) Excess Funds Project Fund, HD6.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The 1996 Proposition requires that agencies to which funds were allocated under the Safe Neighborhood Parks Propositions of 1992 and 1996 encumber all such funds prior to receiving grants of Excess Funds. MRCA and NAS each meet this requirement.

The 1996 Proposition provides a method for determining, each fiscal year, the amount of funds available in the following fiscal year to fund capital improvement projects in addition to the amounts specifically identified for projects in the Safe Neighborhood Parks Propositions of 1992 and 1996. The recommended grant will be funded from the Excess Funds available to the First Supervisorial District for Specified projects.

The Board may establish additional conditions on grants of Excess Funds. The Director will be authorized to award grants when all applicable conditions have been met. Any funds allocated by the Board, but not encumbered by award of a grant contract in the same fiscal year, shall be available for allocation by the Board in the following fiscal year.

On June 2, 2009, the Board approved the Procedural Guide to govern the administration of RPOSD grants. The Procedural Guide will appropriately govern the administration of the recommended grant as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

All public agency projects funded by RPOSD are required to comply with CEQA as a condition of the grant. The lead agency is responsible for preparing the appropriate environmental documentation for the project. RPOSD is the lead agency for the proposed Project.

The proposed Project is categorically exempt from CEQA. The Project, which consists of general improvements to the Center, including development of an entry sign, rehabilitation of existing courtyard wall and stone pavers, purchase and installation of a replacement HVAC system, rehabilitation of existing meeting spaces, and improvements to the existing children's natural play area, is within certain classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment in that it meets the criteria set forth in Sections 15301(d), 15302(c), and 15303(e) of the State CEQA Guidelines and Classes 1(c), 2(e), and 3(b) of the County's Environmental Document Reporting Procedures and Guidelines, Appendix G, because the proposed Project consists of rehabilitation of existing facilities involving negligible or no expansion of an existing use, replacement of structures where the new structures will be located on the same site and have the same purpose and capacity of the structures replaced, and installation of small new accessory structures.

The proposed Project is not in a sensitive environment, and there are no cumulative impacts, unusual circumstances, or other limiting factors that would make the exemption inapplicable based on the proposed Project records.

CONTRACTING PROCESS

A Grant Project Agreement (Agreement) will be entered into and administered under authority delegated to the Director and pursuant to the Procedural Guide approved by the Board in 2009 only if all applicable conditions of the grant have been met. The Agreement will be approved as to form by County Counsel.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

The recommended actions will have no impact on any other projects funded by RPOSD, but are required for the enhancement of safe and accessible recreational opportunities in the First Supervisorial District.

CONCLUSION

Please return one adopted copy of this letter to the Chief Executive Office, Capital Projects/Debt Management Division, and one to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Respectfully submitted,



RUSS GUINEY
Director

RG:JB:WRO:tb

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors